

Remarks of State Bar Executive Director George Brown

9/6/06

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,
members of the judiciary,
Justices

Hi, Chief

Isn't this a beautiful building?

My 96 year old aunt, who lives in California, and who has visited nearly every state capitol in the country, says this is the most beautiful state capitol building in the nation.

When it was constructed nearly 100 years ago, this beautiful, historic building was built to symbolize state government at the same time it was built to house state government.

We see much of that symbolism around us here in the rotunda, from the strength and majesty of the columns and the vaulted archways that define each wingto the mosaic tiles at the interior corners representing the various roles of government.

Even more importantly, the building itself represents the relationship between the three branches of our government.

Originally, the ground floor, where most of you entered today, was the location of the offices of various state administrative workers.

On the first floor, where we now stand, we found the offices of the executive branch,

with the governor and attorney general in the east wing where they are today, and with the offices of the other constitutional officers, the secretary of state, the state treasurer, and the state school superintendent, originally in the other three wings.

The second floor, both then and now, houses the lawmaking branches of government.

In the west and south wings we find the State Assembly and the State Senate.

And in the east wing of the second floor, directly above the governor's office, sits the Supreme Court, with its beautiful hearing room.

Today, the placement of the legislative and judicial branches of government next to each other on the same floor in our capitol building continues to provide us a visual representation,..... a visual reminder, ...that the legislative branch and the judicial branch have equal responsibility for the laws of our state.

So it is appropriate that we recognize this historic day in this most beautiful setting.

Fifty years a lawyer, thirty years a justice of the Supreme Court, with the last 10 as chief justice.

A national leader in the law.

Known throughout the country for her many accomplishments.

So, how does one become chief justice?

In some states, it is a separately elected or appointed position.

In Wisconsin, you just have to outlast everyone who got to the bench before you.

But if it takes longevity to become chief justice, it takes leadership to be chief justice.

And this chief justice has not been afraid to be a leader.

Under her leadership, we have seen the Court's administrative conferences opened to the public for the first time in history.

We have seen the creation of numerous pro se forms to aid those who are unrepresented in court.

We have seen rapid growth in the Court's efforts to reach out and educate the public about the role of the courts in our society..... many of these, such as the Judicial Teacher Institute and the Court with Class programs, in conjunction with the State Bar.

Under her leadership we have seen greater outreach to the state legislature, where improved relationships have helped retain as many resources for the court as possible during numerous difficult state budget cycles.

And, under her leadership, we have seen aerobics at the State Bar annual convention.

Of course, leaders are not without their critics, and that criticism can be hard and it can be hard to take.

When that criticism becomes difficult, Chief, I'd like you to remember some words spoken by my favorite lawyer, who faced many difficult decisions:

"I do the very best I know how, the very best I can.

If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything.

If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference."

[PAUSE]

Finally, I would like to close with another quote, one sometimes attributed to Clio, the muse of history, one of the nine daughters of Zeus.

"Well-behaved women don't make history"

Congratulations on making history, Chief.